United Nations A/S-22/PV.5

General Assembly
Twenty-second Special Session

Official Records

5th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 28 September 1999, 7 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Gurirab ..... (Namibia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Hasan (Iraq), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 7.10 p.m.

Agenda item 8 *(continued)*

Review and appraisal of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States

The Acting President: I give the floor to His Excellency the Honourable Mr. Rajkeswur Purryag, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Trade of Mauritius.

Mr. Purryag (Mauritius): It is with great pleasure that I join the delegations which have preceded me to congratulate the President most warmly on his election to preside over this special session of the General Assembly on the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, and the United Nations system for convening this special session to address the particular concerns of the small island developing States.

My delegation endorses fully the statements made yesterday by Guyana on behalf of the Group of 77 and by Samoa on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States.

It could not have been more opportune for this event to take place at the dawn of a new millennium and prior to the convening of the third World Trade Organization (WTO) ministerial conference in November 1999 and the tenth meeting of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in February 2000.

Indeed, we feel reassured by the large attendance and participation, which demonstrate that there is global interest in the problems facing small island developing States. We also feel confident that at the end of this special session a broad consensus will emerge to take the process of implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action further.

The adoption of Agenda 21 in 1992 by the Earth Summit and the Barbados Declaration and Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States in 1994 is clear recognition by the international community of the existence of small island developing States as a category of States with their own specificities, inherent constraints and development needs.

The problems facing small island developing States arise essentially from their specificities over which we have little or no control. Small island developing States are not responsible for global warming and climate change, and yet they suffer from the consequences and have to pay a heavy price to protect their coastline and low-lying areas from being submerged. Otherwise, their tourism industry may be devastated, and with that the hope for sustainable tourism might be thwarted.

99-85938 (E)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

We have no control over the terrible hurricanes that very often devastate our fragile economies. Our land areas are populous and markets are small. We can grow crops that are suitable to the terrains and that can better withstand adverse climatic conditions. Our freshwater resources are severely limited and we are prone to draught. Small island developing States generally are deprived of mineral resources. The absence of economies of scale inhibits diversification and industrialization.

We are heavily dependent on trade and are thus exposed to terms of trade and income volatility that create vulnerability. Most of these issues, including our remoteness and locational handicaps, were addressed very ably and eloquently by the representatives of Saint Lucia, Barbados, Cyprus, Seychelles, Cape Verde, Fiji and others in their interventions, and we support them.

It is against such a background that small island developing States are expected to adapt and keep pace with globalization and comply with the WTO rules, obligations and disciplines. The tasks are enormous and daunting.

Five years ago in Barbados, small island developing States and the international community, through the adoption of the Barbados Declaration and Programme of Action, sent a strong political message for joint and sustained actions in favour of small island developing States, with a shared sense of common purpose and partnership and a vision underpinned by concrete actions in a number of sectors. Indeed, these sectors of cooperation and action are vital for the sustained growth and sustainable development of small island developing States.

Today, at the time of the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action, we have a feeling of disappointment. At the national level, Mauritius has taken a number of legislative and institutional measures and has instituted programme and projects. But they are small and insignificant compared to the challenges and to our needs. Unfortunately, concrete actions at the international level have not been forthcoming, especially in terms of resource flows and measures to mitigate the adverse effects on small island developing States of certain activities and developments both natural and man-made, including gas emissions causing greenhouse effects.

It is also imperative to operationalize the 300 or so projects which were presented at the donors conference last February. Concrete actions need to be taken urgently on these if the international community really wants to honour the vision of the 1992 Rio Earth Summit and the 1994 Barbados Declaration and Programme of Action. Let us take the opportunity of this special session to reaffirm our commitment to this instrument and to other initiatives that have been taken recently.

In this respect, we welcome the setting up of a Joint Commonwealth Secretariat/World Bank Task Force on Small States — many of them are small island developing States — to address the problems of small States and also to develop a generally, if not universally, acceptable vulnerability index. Such an index, we believe, will transform our recognition of the specificity and needs of small island developing States as a category of developing countries into practical tools, measures and instruments in order to elaborate special provisions by the World Bank, the WTO, UNCTAD and the United Nations and its specialized agencies, such as the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development.

We are encouraged by the reference made in the 1998 Geneva WTO ministerial declaration relating to the risk of marginalization of small economies, many of which are small island developing States. We express the hope that, at the third WTO ministerial conference in Seattle, concrete actions will be taken to operationalize this recognition. Like the previous four Lomé Conventions, we also expect, in the ongoing negotiations for a post-Lomé IV agreement, the European Union to continue to provide special treatment to small and vulnerable African, Caribbean and Pacific island States.

We also strongly believe, especially in the wake of the unacceptable treatment given to the banana issue at the WTO, that the traditional provisions on special and differential treatment for developing countries, such as exemptions and exceptions or longer transitional periods, may no longer suffice. Rather, a dimension to promote the sustainable development of small island developing States should be built into the basic rules of the WTO and its various sectoral agreements so as to create a level playing field. The inherent constraints on small island developing States are in most cases of a permanent nature and can be addressed only through the adoption of long-term measures, be they in the economic, financial, trade or social sectors.

We were comforted by the statements made by Finland on behalf of the European Union and endorsed by Germany and Belgium to the effect that the European Union supports the need to give special consideration to small island developing States and their vulnerability. We also welcome the reassurance given by the European

Union to the conclusion of a new post-Lomé instrument of cooperation and partnership for the coming decade and beyond, and its acceptance of small island developing States receiving even more secured access to markets.

The difficulty of small island developing States having access to international financial markets and concessionary loans because of their relatively high gross domestic product per capita is a cause of serious concern. Gross domestic product per capita does not reflect small island developing States' inherent constraints, lack of economic resilience, creditworthiness and high foreign and domestic debts. In the case of Mauritius, out of a total debt of 51 billion rupees, 40 billion are domestic debt. This constitutes a heavy burden on the national budget and constrains the capacity of the Government to finance the modernization and development of vital infrastructure and utilities necessary for sustained growth, without which there is a risk of exclusion and marginalization of the vulnerable groups of the population.

Like many small island developing States, Mauritius faces serious environmental danger. For example, because of the recent severe, prolonged and unprecedented drought, the growth of the gross domestic product of Mauritius will be around 2 per cent compared to 5.2 per cent last year and a forecast of 5.6 per cent for 1999. These are phenomena over which we have no control.

It is true that some small island developing States, including Mauritius, have registered positive and sustained economic growth. This is not because of their small size but in spite of it. The success of Mauritius may be rightly attributed to the existence of preferential access to the market of the European Union under the Sugar Protocol and the Lomé Convention, relatively large inflows of foreign aid and the prevalence of political and social stability underpinned by democratic principles, values and institutions, as well as the availability of a literate work force and sound macroeconomic policies. All these factors have contributed to ensure social cohesion in a small island characterized by multi-ethnicity which otherwise makes the social fabric quite fragile. But these preferences are being constantly eroded and may be threatened by the proposals on alternative trade arrangements. We need to be careful about and responsive to the specific situation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States, including small island developing States.

Hence, the challenge for small island developing States is to make growth further sustainable, to ensure economic development with social justice and to mainstream all segments of the population in the socio-economic development process. This challenge cannot be easily faced without props in the form of preferential market access and eligibility to concessional loans.

As Germany has rightly pointed out, international trade is an important prerequisite for sustainable development and changes in the international trade regime would weaken terms of trade and national incomes. We therefore urge the WTO to recognize this in view of the specificities and needs of small economies, including small island developing States, so as to provide special and differential treatment commensurate with their development needs. In this respect, we welcome and appreciate the support of the Group of 77 and a number of developed countries.

Against such a background, we are of the view that we have to go beyond the review of the Barbados Programme of Action and its scope of activities. I propose that the Barbados Programme of Action be enlarged beyond environmental concerns, which are admittedly important, so as to embrace the wider context of trade, investment and finance. We need a coherent and multi-pronged strategy to tackle the problems of small island developing States in order to ensure, on a sound basis, their sustained growth and sustainable socio-economic development and thereby contribute to peace and security, to which we are all committed.

The transportation of hazardous waste across the seas is a matter of serious concern to many States and to small island developing States in particular, which, surrounded by the ocean, are never far from the sea routes which the transporting vessels take. Only a few weeks ago, the Government of Mauritius took steps to prohibit the entry of one such vessel into our waters as it sailed through the Indian Ocean. We fully understand the concern of the Caribbean small island developing States in this regard and support their proposal in respect of the Caribbean Sea. Indian Ocean States will also be taking appropriate action on this matter.

It is our sincere hope that the special session underscores the urgency in addressing the problems facing small island developing States and that the international community will assume its responsibility to find urgent solutions to the problem of small island developing States.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): Before giving the floor to the next speaker, I would like to remind Members of the Assembly that the time limit for statements in this session is five minutes only.

I now call on His Excellency Mr. José Pereira Batista, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Guinea-Bissau.

Mr. Batista (Guinea-Bissau) (*spoke in Portuguese; English translation furnished by the delegation*): On behalf of the delegation of Guinea-Bissau, I would like first of all to congratulate, through you, Sir, the President of this special session of the General Assembly. I am convinced that this session will make it possible to advance in the promotion and implementation of the sustainable development of small island developing States. In the pursuit of this objective, the Assembly may rely on the cooperation of the delegation of Guinea-Bissau.

Guinea-Bissau is a small country that is largely insular. Like other island countries, it must confront enormous difficulties in its development effort, stemming in part from geographic characteristics. The irregularity of its territory, the lack of means of transport and communication, precarious economic and social structures and problems of marine and coastal pollution are part of the long list of these constraints.

Added to this fragile structural network is a military and political conflict which lasted from 7 June 1998 to 7 May 1999. That crisis took a great toll in human life and resulted in the displacement of thousands of individuals, above all in the Archipelago dos Bijagós, with nefarious consequences for the environment and the destruction of economic and social infrastructures. The result was a paralysis of the administrative fabric, which caused a great number of refugees in the countries in the subregion and in Portugal. Consequently, the capacity for reconstruction and rehabilitation of the country has suffered.

In this context, I would like more than ever to underscore the imperative of my country benefiting from the Barbados Programme of Action adopted by the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States in 1994. In our view, this Programme is a genuine guide for the mobilization of energies and capacities, not only for the countries in question but also for the international community, with the purpose of attaining sustainable development of the countries belonging to this family.

Five years after the adoption of this Programme, what conclusions can be drawn? Has there been any progress? What route must we follow to achieve the objectives that have been advocated?

In our view, positive steps have been taken. The sustainable development of small island developing States in various regions of the world must be a priority, as many delegations before mine have said. By way of illustration, we can note the effective creation of measures to strengthen States and Government structures dealing with the environment, the definition of national strategies for environmental protection and sustainable development, and the institutionalization of a regional cooperation mechanism for the small island developing States. Guinea-Bissau is among those countries which have carried out such projects.

While underscoring that progress has been achieved, a wide gap still separates us from the objectives advocated in the Programme. Hence, we would like to launch an appeal to the international community, particularly the industrialized countries, to render technical support to the small island developing States. This would make it possible to consolidate their capacities and help them to confront the needs for stable development and to overcome the inherent obstacles to participation in the ongoing globalization process.

Let there be no doubt: there is a lack of qualified human resources, appropriate technologies and financial possibilities in our countries. These obstacles hamper the implementation of the Programme of Action. We must find a better way.

We appeal to the international community, especially the developed countries, to honour the commitments they have made to guarantee the necessary support to the small island developing States in accordance with the principles and spirit of the Programme of Action. We also support the Plan of Action of the Food and Agriculture Organization and the Rome Declaration to consolidate efforts to help these countries.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Hasmy Agam, chairman of the delegation of Malaysia.

Mr. Hasmy (Malaysia): My delegation is pleased to see that the small island developing States group is now enriched by three new members, namely the Republic of Kiribati, the Republic of Nauru and the Kingdom of

Tonga, each with its own potentialities. We welcome them most warmly to the United Nations family of Member States.

Malaysia attaches importance to the convening of this special session, as it provides a forum for highlighting the particular concerns and problems of small island States for the larger membership of the Organization.

At its nineteenth special session the Assembly reviewed the implementation of Agenda 21. Among other things, this also gave us an opportunity to remind ourselves of the importance of the small island developing States as a group that required special attention. Similarly, at the various forums on the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, whenever we talk of global warming and the consequent sea level rise, our attention inevitably falls also on the vulnerability of the small island developing States.

At this twenty-second special session of the General Assembly our attention is focused specifically on the progress made since the adoption of the Barbados Programme of Action in 1994. The Barbados Declaration pointed out that small island states are particularly vulnerable to natural as well as environmental disasters and have a limited capacity to respond to and recover from such disasters.

We also recently witnessed the extensive damage wreaked by hurricanes Mitch and George on the eastern seaboard of the United States. We can only imagine how much more devastating and terrifying the impact of such natural disasters might be on small, vulnerable island States.

As we meet today, we are conscious of the vulnerability of small island developing States to environmental disasters, but there is also a need to look at their vulnerability in the context of globalization and liberalization. The marginalization of the small island developing States, particularly those that are in the low per capita income group, will further complicate the sustainability of development in these countries.

Malaysia strongly supports the position of the small island developing States in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change negotiations. We support the call that developed countries should take domestic action to reduce greenhouse gases to combat climate change and sea level rise. The adverse impact includes submergence of precious land, loss of water and coastal resources, threats to food production and biodiversity and associated economic losses. Global warming may increase the frequency and intensity of storms and storm surges, which would have devastating effects on small island States.

In the important negotiations on the Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol, Malaysia is pleased to have aligned itself with the concerns of small island States. Together, we have called upon the developed countries to take serious domestic action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. We agree that action must be taken immediately to reduce such emissions — the ameliorating effects of which would only be felt many years hence — in order to reduce the risks of sea level rise and climate change which threaten the very survival of small island States.

Under the clean development mechanism of the Kyoto Protocol, an adaptation fund will be set up. Malaysia will work closely with the small island developing States to ensure that the fund is administered in the most effective manner so as to assist those small island developing States that are currently fighting the adverse impact of climate change and sea level rise.

We support the call of small island States for enhancement of research in and development of technologies to adapt to, and mitigate the adverse impact of, climate change. We also support the need to expand a systematic observation network for long- term detection of climate and climate changes as well as building endogenous capacity in the adaptation of technology.

Malaysia hopes that when we next review progress in the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action, in 2004, we will be able to see a more tangible outcome of sustained efforts in this area of international cooperation.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Patrick Albert Lewis, chairman of the delegation of Antigua and Barbuda.

Mr. Lewis (Antigua and Barbuda): Let me at the outset convey my delegation's hearty support for the President's unanimous election to the presidency of the fifty-fourth session and, by acclamation, of this twenty-second special session of the General Assembly. We pledge our full cooperation to him as he presides over the deliberations of this important session.

My delegation wishes to acknowledge and fully support the statements made by Guyana on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and that made by Samoa on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS). The Alliance now collectively speaks with 43 voices in unison for the issue which unites us: our sustainable development.

In the preparatory process to this special session, we collectively had the occasion to look back at the last five years since the adoption of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States at the first post-Rio Conference, in Bridgetown. The overwhelming conclusion of the review was that, despite considerable progress at the national level, implementation in a number of key areas of the Barbados Programme of Action has been sadly lacking, particularly at the international level.

Recent world events such as the rulings of the World Trade Organization do not bode well for the implementation of key aspects of the "state of progress" document. For example, many small island developing States are facing the loss of trade concessions that sustained their agricultural economies. Such rulings, made in the name of trade liberalization, serve only to restrict or eliminate the very trade preferences on which many small island developing States depend for their economic development.

While we have listened to arguments that there are significant opportunities arising from increased global trade and economic integration, so far the evidence on the ground only points to the significant and increased risk of the economic marginalization of most small island developing States, due in part to their well-known vulnerabilities. Against this backdrop, we sincerely hope that the provisions of the soon to be adopted text requesting the multilateral trading system to consider granting special and differential treatment to States will be taken fully into consideration during the Millennium Round of trade negotiations.

The need to address the inherent vulnerabilities of small island developing States cannot be overemphasized. In the ultimate irony of ironies, many small island developing States have relatively high per capita gross national products, which are always almost exclusively used as a benchmark of their success and, hence, to exclude them from consideration for assistance. What is most frequently overlooked is the fact that the economies of most small island developing States lack the resilience needed to recover quickly from one single unfortunate event such as a natural disaster, which can in the space of a few hours obliterate the physical infrastructure, industrial base and agricultural assets of small island developing States, thereby setting back their economic development by many years. The need to develop a more reliable indicator or set of indicators to more accurately gauge the development of small island developing States is therefore urgently needed. In our view, the use of a single income measure such as gross national product to determine the economic well-being of small island developing States — and hence exclude them from special economic consideration — is at best unreliable and at worst unjust.

This is why we placed the highest possible emphasis on the conclusion of the work currently under way both here in the United Nations and jointly by the World Bank and the Commonwealth Secretariat on the development of a vulnerability index. But that should not be the end of this endeavour. Once the index is developed, we urge its widespread use by all multilateral financial and trade institutions, as well as bilateral aid agencies, as one of the criteria for determining special consideration for our countries.

Our vulnerability to natural disasters is also of grave concern. The increase in the frequency and intensity of hurricanes in the Caribbean region is already having effects on some of the life support systems in many of our countries. When one considers the recent findings of the Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change regarding a discernable influence of human activities on the climate system, the spectre of climate change — which is a global issue not of our own making, but for which we will ultimately pay perhaps the greatest price with the disappearance of our countries — haunts us and raises questions of equity and ethics. We again urge our large continental neighbours in the developed world to cut back on their use of fossil fuels that heats the atmosphere.

Let me conclude by reiterating my country's profound disappointment in the collective inability of the Member States in the General Assembly to conclude an agreement on a resolution calling for the designation of the Caribbean Sea as a special area in the context of sustainable development. We continue to believe that the thrust of the original draft resolution — to establish a regime for the wide protection of the Caribbean Sea and for the sustainable development of its coastal and marine resources — is a valid one. Nevertheless, we are pleased that the matter, albeit in a different form, has been

referred to the Second Committee for further consideration, and we welcome the pledges of all concerned to successfully resolve this important issue during the current session of the Assembly.

On adoption of this review of the Barbados Programme of Action, we sincerely hope that the international community will measurably and demonstrably do its part to assist small island developing States in implementing it, taking into account the determination of small island developing States to effectively manage the Barbados Programme of Action, and the Member States' acceptance of their primary responsibility for their sustainable development.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now call on Mr. Lee See-young, chairman of the delegation of the Republic of Korea.

Mr. Lee See-young (Republic of Korea): On behalf of the delegation of the Republic of Korea, I would like to extend my congratulations to the President on his election as the President of the General Assembly at this special session.

Five years ago the international community took a bold step towards the sustainable development of small island States by adopting the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. The Government of the Republic of Korea strongly supported the Barbados Programme of Action, as it provided for the first time a comprehensive blueprint for the sustainable development of these countries.

Since 1994 considerable progress has been made in the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action, at both the national and international levels. We highly commend those small island countries that have introduced new policies, appropriate institutions and legislative and regulatory reforms in accordance with the guidelines of the Programme. Regional cooperation has been strengthened to set priorities for the sustainable development of these small island developing States. We have also witnessed the significant development of international norms to address global environmental degradation and natural disasters, which particularly threaten most small island countries.

Despite these achievements, small island States still face significant challenges. Environmental vulnerabilities such as sea level rise and natural disasters caused by global warming have devastating implications for them, threatening their very survival. Furthermore, as the process of globalization has accelerated in recent years, these small island States are particularly prone to the marginalization, due largely to their insufficient capacity to capitalize on the opportunities afforded by globalization.

To overcome such challenges and to help integrate these countries into the global economy in a more favourable manner, it is vital for the international community to renew its commitments to the Barbados Programme and to foster stronger global partnership in the following ways.

First, the trend of declining official development assistance to small island States needs to be reversed to help enhance their capacity to implement the Barbados Programme of Action. In the same vein, the international community should take steps to allow these countries more market access and to promote trade and investment with them. We also urge an early completion of negotiations on the Kyoto mechanism, as provided for in the Kyoto Protocol.

Secondly, the transfer of environmentally sound technologies is essential for capacity-building and creating an enabling environment in these countries. To this end, we should promote wider participation of the small island developing States in the clean technology initiatives and public-private partnerships. In an effort to facilitate such transfer of technologies, my Government, in cooperation with the United Nations, will host the High-level Forum on South-South Cooperation in Science and Technology Transfer in February next year.

Third, emphasis should also be placed on the full compliance by all parties concerned with major environmental conventions in the fields of climate change, biological diversity and hazardous waste.

The Government of the Republic of Korea has long attached great importance to the strengthening of its friendly ties and cooperation with small island States. In 1995, we joined the South Pacific Forum as a dialogue partner. Since last year, we have been participating in the meeting of the Association of Caribbean States as an observer. These initiatives represent our commitment to sharing with these small island developing countries the experience and knowledge we have acquired through our own development process in the spirit of South-South cooperation. We will continue to extend technical cooperation and financial contributions to the small island

States through the Korea International Cooperation Agency and also continue to make contributions to the Global Environment Facility.

We now live in a mutually interdependent global village. As the Secretary-General put it so well yesterday, "brighter horizons for small islands can mean brighter horizons for the world" and for all of us. My delegation sincerely hopes that this special session will prove to be an opportunity for the international community to reaffirm its commitment to the world's small island nations and to revitalizing the spirit of the Barbados Conference, which declared the sustainability of small island States to be one of the principal tasks of the global community.

The Republic of Korea will certainly continue to do its part in these global efforts.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Luigi Boselli, head of the observer delegation of the European Commission.

Mr. Boselli (European Commission): Following the statement made by the representative of Finland on behalf of the European Union, I have the pleasure to address this special session of the General Assembly on behalf of the European Community.

Since the 1994 Barbados Conference, the world development environment has undergone important changes. The specific policies, actions and measures defined by the Barbados Programme of Action should be implemented in such a way as to adapt to these changes.

We acknowledge with satisfaction that the Barbados Programme of Action has led to appropriate action in many countries, and that policies and programmes have been introduced or amended to conform to the Barbados principles. For that reason, the European Union development activities financed by the European Development Fund and the European development budget will continue to contribute to the 14 priority areas mentioned in the Barbados Programme of Action in our partner small island developing States, as they have done so far.

During the seventh session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, acting as a preparatory committee to this special session, we presented the booklet "The European Union's Cooperation with Small Island Developing States in the Framework of the Barbados Programme of Action", in which we showed the congruence between the Programme and the European Union cooperation with small island developing States, and we listed 185 European Community-financed projects for those States within the 14 priority areas.

The European Community is the most important donor to the small island developing States, and we expect to continue in this position in the future.

Between 1995 and 1997, European assistance to small island developing States has fluctuated between $700 million and $900 million a year. High priority is given to least developed countries. Forty per cent of the European Union official development assistance to those States is channelled through the European Community, while 60 per cent is provided by our 15 Member States bilaterally or through international organizations or non-governmental organizations.

The small island developing States receive, and will continue to receive, a high volume of aid per capita because that aid is based on a number of criteria, of which island status is one. In this sense, no major changes in our official development assistance to small island developing States can be expected.

On the threshold of the twenty-first century, the European Union is negotiating its future relations with the 71-country African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) group, currently governed by the Lomé IV Convention. With the current Convention due to expire in February 2000, we are negotiating the future partnership agreement.

During the negotiations, the special vulnerabilities of the island States continue to be recognized. Consideration is being given to including more island States in the relationship. In addition to the 26 ACP small island developing States that are already signatories of the Lomé Convention, we decided to admit as observers to the present negotiations seven other countries included in the group of small island developing States: Cuba, the Cook Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, Niue, Palau and the Marshall Islands.

In this context, I am glad to underline the excellent dialogue we have with the Caribbean Community and the Caribbean Forum (CARIFORUM), the Indian Ocean Commission, the South Pacific Forum and some other Caribbean, Indian Ocean and Pacific institutions.

We fully agree with the ideas expressed by the representatives of the three new Members of the United

Nations 188-nation family, the Republic of Kiribati, the Republic of Nauru and the Kingdom of Tonga, when all three suggested that the issue of small island developing States must be seriously pursued by the international community.

Five years on from the Barbados Conference, the progress of the small island developing States in some areas has been impressive. However, it is also clear that there is still much to be done to ensure that the objectives of the Barbados Programme of Action are implemented, that the rich environment of the small island developing States is protected, and that the three components of sustainable development are fully integrated.

Allow me to reaffirm the European Community's commitment to the objectives agreed on in the Barbados Programme of Action and our support for the key elements for future action that have been identified during this twenty-second special session of the General Assembly.

May I finish by giving special thanks to Ambassadors Slade and Ashe and to the Chairman of the Group of 77 for their commitment and hard work in the preparations for this session. They have helped to establish the excellent dialogue we have now between the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) and the donor community. This will allow us to agree on ways and means to help the small island developing States overcome their vulnerabilities.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to Archbishop Renato Raffaele Martino, chairman of the observer delegation of the Holy See.

Archbishop Martino (Holy See): With all of the intense negotiations that have taken place during the past several months, would it not be safe to say that the preparations for this special session began as the final gavel sounded in Barbados, bringing the World Conference on Sustainable Development of Small Island Development States to a close? My delegation believes that they have.

At that time, five short years ago, speaking on behalf of the Holy See, I noted that the Barbados Conference was the first intersection on the road from the United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development in Rio. Today we arrive at a new junction in what has grown from a path to a superhighway, stretching from the present to the future. There have been obstacles, but progress continues to be made on the way towards sustainable development.

My delegation is interested in the outcome of this special session because the Holy See has always recognized the centrality of human beings in concerns about sustainable development. That first principle of the Rio Declaration must continue to guide each and every initiative undertaken in the name of development. Respect for the dignity and freedom of each person affected by development programmes must be the guiding force in our work. That being said, it is true that improvement of the quality of life for all, especially the inhabitants of small island States, must be the first purpose now and in the future implementation of this Programme of Action. These programmes must be formulated and implemented not just in theory but in relation to the actual needs of the men, women and children of today and future generations.

His Holiness Pope John Paul II stressed that balance between social and economic development during his visits to Jamaica and to Papua New Guinea, when he said,

> "Dear friends, as you look out upon your beautiful land with its jungles and mighty rivers, its mountains and deep valleys, its volcanoes and limitless seas, give thanks to God, whose goodness is without end. With your many different languages and traditions, you are a wonderful tapestry which God is weaving into the image of a diverse but united family of peoples upon whom He wishes to shower His blessings."

> "Now is the time for the island's [people] to strive to ensure that the principles which guide political, social and economic life are in conformity with God's law and with the Gospel. Now is the time to work together to overcome the effects of injustice and exploitation, to counteract the lack of concern for the needs of the poor and the disadvantaged, the lack of respect for the dignity and value of each person, especially women and children."

> "As citizens, you should feel the need to work to improve your country, and to ensure that society develops in honesty and justice, harmony and solidarity."

The areas of priority action identified by the Commission on Sustainable Development call attention to the fact that the Programme of Action remains a valuable, living framework for the sustainable

development efforts being undertaken. The discussion surrounding small island States reveals the fact that no person or group lives in isolation. What affects one affects others. My delegation believes that the benefits of discussing the issues and proposing solutions for removing the obstacles that challenge the sustainable development of small islands will be felt in every corner of the world.

In this understanding of human solidarity, we cannot lose sight of the need for responsible stewardship which demands attention to the common good. No one person — and no one group of people — is allowed to determine his or her relationship with the universe. The universal common good transcends the interests of the individual, national and political agendas and the limits of time.

Responsible stewardship and genuine human solidarity are directed to all critical areas discussed in this review process and must also remain the starting point in the discussion of access to basic social services. The effects of climate change, the issue of freshwater resources, the protection of the coastal and marine environment, the mobilization of energy resources and the promotion of sustainable tourism must be addressed in the context of health, education, nutrition, shelter and security.

In view of the progress made during this discussion, the Holy See wishes to state once again that simply giving aid, however laudable and necessary, is not sufficient to touch all the aspects of human solidarity that must be offered to those in need. Nations must work towards creating new, more just and, hence, more effective international structures in such spheres as economics, trade, industrial development, finance and the transfer of technology.

The Catholic Church will continue to develop and promote specific programmes in those critical areas that seek to improve human life in some of the poorest and least developed areas of small island developing States and in so doing, help to improve life for all. My delegation applauds the progress made in this special session and will look forward to future initiatives, which will be the next step in attaining the goals of sustainable development for all.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. José Antonio Linati-Bosch, Chairman of the observer delegation for the Sovereign Military Order of Malta.

Mr. Linati-Bosch (Sovereign Military Order of Malta): I would like to express my sincere congratulations to the President of the General Assembly on his election.

I am here on behalf of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta, a subject of international law, which this year is commemorating the nine hundredth anniversary of its foundation. The long period of our existence confers upon our Order the title of the oldest active humanitarian entity and, through a long uninterrupted process, we have used our experience and demonstrated our capacity to continue to fight for world peace and to express our concern for the health and welfare of mankind.

The Order was granted the status of Permanent Observer to the United Nations in 1994 and today maintains full diplomatic relations with 83 Member States present here in the General Assembly, among them several small island States, whose problems are being discussed and considered here.

This special session of the General Assembly is connected with the areas of economic and social development that include human rights. The sustainable development of small island States, which are susceptible to the effects of climate change and which are also geographically vulnerable, is a very important issue. Building upon the achievements of this special session, the Order of Malta intends to actively contribute to international cooperative action. The international community must take prompt and concerted action in responding to large-scale natural disasters like last year's hurricanes in the Caribbean and in the Pacific. These extraordinary events require work to be carried out on a permanent basis, including reconstruction efforts, so as to provide for the creation of jobs and development, thereby contributing to narrowing the gap between the rich and the poor.

At the same time, we must pay attention to the fact that globalization engenders creativity by facilitating interaction among various cultures. But we must not forget the due consideration that must be given to the cultural diversity of the world.

We are conscious of the difficulties encountered by small island States in maintaining continuous development without damaging their ecosystems, in ensuring that their populations enjoy a growing and satisfactory standard of living, and in solving special problems such as protecting sources of fresh water and preventing health hazards that

can result from particular difficulties. The Sovereign Order of Malta is ready to support this difficult process so that Member States, through effective international cooperation, can achieve sustainable development and fight the persistence of poverty, helping to provide basic social services, including nutrition and health care.

The President took the Chair.

International cooperation does not include only peacekeeping operations; it also plays a role in the everyday lives of many people, protecting them from hunger, poverty, disease and illiteracy. To promote sustainable development is also to protect the global environment and human rights. The best way to help prevent and eliminate conflicts is to create conditions for a worthy life as well as friendly relations among communities based on the principles of equal rights and respect for international law. The Sovereign Order of Malta is ready to put its experience to the best use. The establishment of medical plans, the training of specialized staff, the creation of ambulance corps and first-aid services, and the provision of surgical instruments and medicines are some of the many items that can be included in agreements between interested States and the Sovereign Order.

The Sovereign Order has been linked in the past with three islands: Rhodes and Malta in the Mediterranean Sea and Saint Kitts in the Caribbean. But I am not here to engage in historical reminiscence. I am here to offer our cooperation in efforts to preserve a fragile and vulnerable heritage and to offer our experience in the hospitaller and health care fields. It is not a generous offer but a duty on our part. Underdevelopment and impoverishment, the threat of marginalization, the burden of external debt, lack of resources and ecological disasters pose a real danger to international peace and sustainable development. The current activities of the Order in more than 100 countries and our recent assistance to the populations affected by hurricanes Charley and Mitch testify to our capacity and goodwill. We know there is a long way to go, but we are glad to be on the right track.

The President: The next speaker is the Observer of Guam, Mr. Robert Underwood.

Mr. Underwood (Guam): It is my distinct honour to present the views of the people of Guam to the General Assembly at its special session on small island developing States. We are grateful for this opportunity to address the Assembly and for the extensive work accomplished at the Barbados Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and in the course of preparations for the special session.

When we discuss sustainable development, the words "small" and "island" are not generally viewed as denoting advantages. The issues identified as important for the sustainable development of small islands are anything but small: climate change, renewable resources and the management of waste come to mind as issues of special concern. We are therefore extremely fortunate that this world body is dedicating resources and expertise to assisting small island States in addressing these long-term issues and in setting the proper course for future success.

But it is in fact our small size and our micro-scale that make small islands important. We would perhaps be harbingers of ecological disasters that the world community could face in the next millennium. Our fragile ecosystems and our interdependent communities make us ideal as the tip of the spear on these global issues. Since we would be amongst the very first to experience the effects of climate change and rising sea levels, the world's collective success or failure would register first on our shores. It is in recognition of this relationship that the developed nations and international organizations, foremost among them the United Nations, have taken an active interest in the problems of small island developing States.

An important issue requiring international cooperation is climate change. Climate change is no longer an academic debate. We have seen in recent years how the effects of El Niño and La Niña translate into typhoons and hurricanes and droughts. We learn quickly that the forces of nature can overwhelm even the best prepared communities and Governments. In Guam's case, we went from the extreme of a super-typhoon, to that of El-Niño-induced fires to that of a drought in the span of 12 months. While Guam cannot greatly influence global climate change, we have an enormous contribution to make in teaching other communities about disaster preparedness and disaster recovery, areas we believe we excel in.

In island communities, the issue of waste management is central to our well-being and our quality of life. We have learned on Guam that the development of an integrated waste management plan is only a first step. Creating the political will to implement tough restrictions and encourage recycling through economic

incentives and penalties seems the bigger challenge. While it may seem easy on paper to develop an integrated waste management system, changing attitudes and eliminating inefficiencies is where the work of Governments begins. Our experience has also been that we are hungry for the very best and newest technologies in waste management. We value the clear skies and clean water and green hills that make our island famous. Keeping it that way through effective waste management strategies that are cost effective is a primary objective. The international community can be very helpful to small island States on these issues by assisting us in making the technological advances accessible to our Governments.

In the area of land resources, Guam shares the common experience of small islands that scarce resources require a higher standard of stewardship. We have invested in satellite mapping, and we dedicate substantial resources to infrastructure development. We may be amongst the few island States that continue to have problems regarding the historical military expropriation of our lands over 50 years ago: more than one third of Guam's land mass continues to be held for military bases. The return of excess military lands is amongst our highest priorities, and, while this may be viewed as an internal issue between Guam and the United States, Guam will continue to discuss the economic and political consequences of this issue in every available forum.

Guam has benefitted from its participation in regional organizations in the area of biodiversity resources. We have created conservation areas on our island and have made progress in protecting endangered and threatened species. We are at the forefront of marine research through innovative programmes at the University of Guam, and we continue to encourage regional cooperation in the management of fisheries. We support the goals of the multilateral high-level consultations on fisheries. We believe that a great deal has been accomplished on fisheries management; more controls need to be exercised by the small island States. In Guam's case, the relationship between our island Government and the United States Government on exclusive economic zones continues to evolve.

Small island States should not be equated with weakness. But our vulnerability to the forces of nature and our relative impact on the international stage relegate us to the sidelines in many instances. Our fragile ecosystems and our small-scale economies make us susceptible to the slightest shifts in balance.

This is why, from our perspective, this special session and the international attention on our unique problems is welcome, timely and of vital importance to all of us in the interconnected world economy.

Thanks in large part to amazing advances in communications, it is the world, not our islands, that is getting smaller. In the new information age, there really are no islands any more. The image of isolated, idyllic Pacific islands, unchanged by the modern world, no longer applies. The new image is more appropriately that of diverse communities, interconnected by technology and at the leading edge of ecological change that concerns all of humanity.

Guam is proud to take its place among the islands of the world and we look forward to making our contributions to mankind's understanding of the relationship between humankind, the vast expanse of the sea and our sacred island homes.

Again, I thank the General Assembly for the opportunity to present Guam's views, and I commend the Assembly for focusing on these issues.

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. Carlyle Corbin, observer of the United States Virgin Islands.

Mr. Corbin (United States Virgin Islands): Mr. President, we wish to express our congratulations on your election to chair these important deliberations, as well as our appreciation to the Member States of this body for their support in according observer status in this special session of the General Assembly to the associate member countries of the various United Nations world conferences.

Our countries have contributed to the global debate at the world conferences on environment, population, social development, sustainable development of small island States, human settlements, natural disaster reduction and women and development as a result of the General Assembly's decisions. We are confident that this status will be extended to us in the remaining special sessions to review the various global plans of action and in the General Assembly as a whole, consistent with a modern approach to the principle of universality.

The concerns of small island developing countries have been under review by the United Nations for several decades. As early as 1976, initiatives of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development addressed

transportation and communications issues in small island developing States. By 1984, the General Assembly had called for immediate and effective implementation of previous resolutions on small island developing States. Later resolutions emphasized the need for concessional assistance and the adverse effects of sea level rise resulting from climate change. In this connection, a meeting of experts and donor countries was convened in 1988, and it recognized the importance of international support for the sustainable economic development of small island developing States. The subsequent adoption of Agenda 21 in 1992, the Barbados Programme of Action in 1994 and the follow-up resolutions on small island developing States over the last five years are only the latest in the long-standing recognition on the part of the international community that the unique conditions of small island developing States require specific measures of assistance in their sustainable development process. The implementation of this multifaceted mandate is overdue.

We have always viewed the Barbados Programme of Action as a tool for sustainable development, rather than merely as one that addresses only environmental issues. We therefore recognize that the effects of accelerating economic globalization are causing additional pressures on the economies of small island developing States. As we continue to concentrate on measures to address our susceptibility to climatic changes brought on by the conditions created by the excessive emission of greenhouse gases, our future growth, relative prosperity and, in many instances, our very survivability are influenced by external economic pressures as well. This must be an integral part of our thinking in this implementation phase.

My Government acknowledges the ongoing activities of the United Nations in implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action. The adoption by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Governing Council last February of a resolution on oceans and seas that made a commitment to addressing critical uncertainties related to climatic change is illustrative. The recent UNEP report Global Environment Outlook also reminds us that time for a rational, well-planned transition to a sustainable system is running out. The convening of the donors' meeting last February to review over 300 projects from small island developing States highlighted the potential role of the United Nations in mobilizing resources. We are confident that the donor community will respond accordingly in providing the necessary assistance.

This importance of resource mobilization and economic linkages was also emphasized in the 1998 declaration on the sustainable development of small island developing States in the Indian Ocean, Mediterranean and Atlantic regions, which called for the international community to supplement a national and international efforts by effective financial support, and for international economic and trade organizations to take account of the special disabilities of small island developing States and of the negative effects arising from the processes of trade liberalization and globalization, especially those associated with removal of preferential trade arrangements.

Small island developing States continue to bring to the attention of the international community the need for additional measures in carrying out the various provisions of the Barbados Programme of Action. The Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) in which my Government enjoys observer status, convened in the Republic of the Marshall Islands last July an important workshop on the clean development mechanism of the Kyoto Protocol and stressed in its Majuro Statement on Climate Change the need for special capacity-building initiatives, the transfer of technology and the importance of renewable energy. The Caribbean Community, at the tenth inter-sessional meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government, which met in Suriname last March, issued an important statement on the trans-shipment of nuclear materials through the Caribbean, citing the potentially catastrophic consequences of any accident for the peoples and for the ecological systems of the Caribbean. This concern was also expressed in the 1998 meeting of heads of Government of the South Pacific Forum and only several days ago was reinforced by the heads of State or Government of AOSIS at its third summit, held here at United Nations Headquarters. AOSIS also supported in its summit communiqué the decisions of the countries of the wider Caribbean to recognize the Caribbean Sea as a special area in the context of sustainable development and expressed concern at the increasing incidence and magnitude of natural disasters and their devastating effect on the communities of small island developing States. AOSIS called for the international community to support appropriate initiatives and mechanisms for strengthening regional and national capabilities for natural disaster prevention, mitigation and rehabilitation. The AOSIS communiqué follows the adoption of the declaration of the second summit of heads of Government of the Association of Caribbean States, which convened last April in the Dominican Republic and which outlined a network of legally binding mechanisms to promote cooperation for the prevention, mitigation and management of natural disasters.

Meanwhile, the South Pacific Group at its eighth meeting of regional disaster managers, held in Samoa earlier this month, emphasized that there are technical measures, traditional practices and public experience that can reduce the extent or severity of economic disasters.

As has often been said, conditions affecting small island developing States are but a preview, an early warning of what is certain to lie ahead for the wider international community. If we recognize one reality in this first five years since the adoption of the Barbados Programme of Action, it should be that the present course is unsustainable, and postponing implementation is no longer an option. It is, indeed, time for action.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Chief Emeka Anyaoku, Secretary-General of the Commonwealth.

Mr. Anyaoku (Commonwealth Secretariat): May I say what a special pleasure it is for me to address the General Assembly at this special session under your presidency, Sir. I welcome the opportunity to do so on behalf of the Commonwealth, an association of 54 countries collectively representing more than a quarter of all humanity. Small States are a big issue for us. As many as 32 of our members are small countries, and of these, 25 are small island developing States.

More than three fifths of the Commonwealth Secretariat's development assistance is directed towards supporting the sustainable development of small States. It covers many of the components of the 1994 Barbados Programme of Action, which we are reviewing here. The Commonwealth, through its operation of a small States office, assists some nine small Commonwealth countries so that they can have representation here at the United Nations. As a result of a special ministerial mission undertaken last year at the request of Commonwealth heads of Government, we have formed with the World Bank a joint Task Force, which is making a comprehensive assessment of how the international community can assist small States in mitigating the various constraints caused by their vulnerability in order to accelerate their economic development.

As a contribution to this general debate, I would like to suggest six priority areas where action is urgently needed to give impetus to the sustainable development of small States.

First, it is vital to avert serious environmental threats such as climate change and sea-level rise. The Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change must enter into force as soon as possible, and commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions should be implemented effectively, with further steps taken to slow down global warming. Vulnerable small States need urgent assistance in developing and implementing plans for adapting to climate change and sea-level rise at the national, subregional and regional levels. Other environmental challenges must also be addressed, such as developing effective policies for waste management; reducing potential threats posed by the shipment of nuclear wastes; protecting the marine environment from pollution from various sources; and reducing the adverse environmental impacts of tourism, on which several small States are so dependent.

Secondly, the destruction caused to the Bahamas by hurricane Floyd, just a few weeks ago, has underscored the importance of strengthening international mechanisms for providing assistance to meet pre- and post-disaster requirements of vulnerable countries.

Thirdly, multilateral, regional and bilateral development organizations should take vulnerability into account in the design of their programmes of assistance for small States. A set of criteria that is broader than per capita gross domestic product and that includes explicit vulnerability indicators should be applied flexibly to determine the economic status and development-assistance requirements of small States. In this regard, the Commonwealth Secretariat has developed a vulnerability index for developing countries which could serve as useful operational tool.

Fourthly, there should be a moratorium on United Nations decisions to graduate small States out of the status of least developed countries, until a sound and robust methodology — which includes indicators of vulnerability — is developed to guide such decisions.

Fifthly, longer transition periods and financing mechanisms can help small States integrate their economies into a more open international trading system, meet transitional costs and gain greater benefits from trade. There is a persuasive case for extending special and differential treatment to the more vulnerable small States. The concerns of vulnerable small States should be given greater recognition in any new round of multilateral trade negotiations launched by the World Trade

Organization Ministerial Conference in Seattle later this year.

Finally, all institutions presently involved in supporting capacity-building in small States need to develop a coherent and properly coordinated strategy to support human resource development and institutional strengthening in those countries experiencing constraints in key areas of economic and environmental management and planning.

I recall that just prior to the 1994 Barbados Conference, I had the opportunity to participate in the work of an eminent persons group at the invitation of the Governor-General of Barbados. This group made several recommendations on the sustainable development of small island developing States. We were greatly encouraged by the Programme of Action agreed to in Barbados. But five years later there remains much to be done. For its part, the Commonwealth will continue to do all that it can, both by itself and working in partnership with the United Nations and other international organizations, to ensure that as we enter a new millennium, small States will become less vulnerable and be able to enjoy greater security and prosperity.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Noel Levi, Secretary General of the South Pacific Forum.

Mr. Levi (South Pacific Forum): The deliberations of this meeting are of particular interest to the South Pacific Forum, which comprises 14 independent and self-governing small island States, together with Australia and New Zealand. These countries, which include some of the smallest in the world, share the vast ocean of the central and western Pacific. While Forum members vary greatly in size, social structures and living standards, we have agreed to work together in a wide range of ways to pursue cohesion, stability and well-being in our countries.

From the perspective of the Forum an overall assessment of the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action could not wait much longer. The South Pacific Forum meeting last year reaffirmed its endorsement of the Barbados Programme of Action as a comprehensive framework with great potential for the region, and it commended implementation efforts currently under way.

Meeting the challenge of sustainable development across all the facets of the environment and economy is a central concern of Forum island members. The Barbados Programme of Action has served as a useful blueprint in meeting this challenge, and Forum members are addressing the issues raised across a broad front of activity.

Our individual national capacities to deal alone with these issues are limited. The region is therefore fortunate to have a range of regional organizations dealing with technical issues related to land, oceans and associated resources, fisheries, the environment, education and sustainable development. Their work is coordinated through the council of regional organizations of the Pacific. It is vital that international agencies use this network of regional organizations to heighten the effectiveness of their activities as development partners.

The path to sustainable development is difficult for us. By any standard, the majority of Forum island countries are very small. This brings with it a host of difficulties, such as limited natural resources, small domestic markets and high per capita infrastructure costs. These difficulties are compounded by isolation from the rest of the world as a result of distance and lack of international transport services. Furthermore, the location and physical characteristics of these States — many being low-lying — render them vulnerable to natural disasters.

One consequence of these characteristics is that income levels can vary significantly, either because of reliance on a narrow range of exports or because natural disasters readily disrupt production.

We believe that work on indexing economic vulnerability has now reached the point where it can be used for policy decisions. Leaders of the South Pacific Forum reiterate the importance of applying a vulnerability index as a more equitable method of determining the development status of countries. They further urge that any decision to graduate any least developed country be deferred until an acceptable vulnerability index can be taken into account in classification decisions and for deciding concessional aid and trade treatment.

The fragility of small island States is not restricted to economic factors. In our region, an environmental vulnerability index is being developed by the South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission, funded by New Zealand. The framework under development is aimed at establishing an acceptable ranking that can be broadly applied and included among the criteria for establishing least-developed-country status.

A longer term issue of critical importance to all Forum members is the risk of sea-level rise caused by global warming. Some of our low-lying island nations are especially vulnerable, with whole communities living under increasing threat to their very existence. It is therefore with a sense of urgency that we watch the international community's endeavours to arrive at a solution to this global problem.

Forum members fully support the agreement reached at Kyoto as a significant first step on the path of ensuring effective global action to combat climate change. The Forum wants the Kyoto Protocol to come into effect as soon as possible and looks for early progress in meeting these commitments.

Apart from the threat of climate change, our stability and security are also threatened by natural disasters, international transport of hazardous wastes, illicit drugs and unlawful challenges to national integrity. This was recognized by our leaders when they adopted the Aitutaki Declaration in 1997.

The Forum strongly reiterates its commitment to the Barbados Programme of Action and the current review process. We are pressing the international community to address those issues which we see as compounding our vulnerability and which in turn could threaten the whole global village. This special session provides a very important opportunity for the international community to fulfil the necessary commitments, provided we all focus on objectives which are realistic and achievable.

In conclusion, it is the hope of the South Pacific Forum that the deliberations of this special session will give good cause for small island developing States to view the approaching millennium with more hope than apprehension. While Forum members have taken on the challenge of meeting the changes that are taking place throughout the world, the small States among them face challenges that cannot be overcome directly through any actions of their own. In addressing these challenges, small island States seek the sympathetic assistance of the developed world and of all international institutions.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Lieutenant Governor Togiola Tulafono, Observer of American Samoa.

Mr. Tulafono (American Samoa): I bring greetings from American Samoa, one of the smallest Territories of the United States in the South Pacific Ocean. I bring greetings and warm regards from our Governor and the people of American Samoa.

It is indeed an honour and a privilege for American Samoa to participate in this special session as an observer for the first time in the history of our country. On behalf of our people, I thank this Assembly and the United States for allowing us this great opportunity and the privilege of standing here today.

American Samoa is proud to join our Pacific neighbours, the Pacific island nations, in supporting the Programme of Action of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. However, we also must insist on and strongly urge the speedy implementation of its initiatives. For us, every day of delay is a day when a little bit more of our precious resources is taken away. Sustainable development will continue to be an elusive goal for us unless we implement programmes to begin the serious management of the limited resources our small island developing States and Territories do possess.

Resource management, in my humble belief, is especially critical for small island States and Territories, such as American Samoa, because of our small size and relative isolation. Viewed individually on a globe, Oceania's thousands of tiny islands appear to be insignificant. However, if they are viewed as a geographical entity, one's perspective of the Pacific islands changes dramatically. We all know that Oceania is in fact a very significant region on a global scale — a region rapidly changing, a region drawing more attention as a last frontier in the modern world.

Because of this, we continue to find ourselves more focused on trying to discover our role as a region in today's world. We have tried to identify the questions that we must ask in trying to pin down that role. What is it about Oceania that best defines our unique status or role as individual island nations and as a collection of island nations? Perhaps, instead of repeating most of what has been said, I may relate some of the experiences we have had in American Samoa that will, hopefully, offer a few lessons to those of us responsible for planning the development of this vast stretch of ocean and resources. It may also demonstrate how the capability existing in small island States and Territories can assist in speeding up the implementation process of the Programme of Action.

Since becoming an unincorporated Territory of the United States in 1900, American Samoa has changed from a subsistence to a cash economy. While we are still trying to retain our cultural traditions, great demands are currently being placed on the most central aspect of our cultural uniqueness: our communal land-tenure system. Our culture, like many cultures throughout Oceania, centres around the important role played by our Chiefs, known as *Matai* in Samoa. *Matai* are traditionally the stewards and caretakers of our lands and near-shore waters. They have determined, for perhaps 3,000 years now, how land is distributed equitably to communal family members for their present use and enjoyment and to take care of so that it may be passed on to future generations. The preservation of our *Matai* system and our culture is of extreme importance to our people and there is active resistance to any change.

Accordingly, there is natural resistance to governmental regulations, which often conflict with the traditional leadership role of the *Matai*. As government leaders and policy-makers, we have made it our policy in American Samoa to try to integrate traditional policy-making systems with modern policy-making systems. Although it has been difficult, we have achieved some measure of success throughout most of our projects. Nevertheless, transitions are under way as we realize the need for acceptance of island-wide, rather than village-level planning.

If I may, I would like to highlight some of the Territory of American Samoa's successes with respect to coral-reef management. We have taken a very pro-active attitude in dealing with the protection of coral reefs around American Samoa as a an active partner within the United States Coral Reef Initiative. Since the Initiative's inception in 1994, American Samoa has taken this to a much higher level, with very limited financial support, and to the grass-roots level. American Samoa on its own initiative has developed regulations, guidelines and educational activities aimed at reducing human disturbances that may inhibit the ability of our coral reef to recover. To further enhance that agenda, American Samoa has also empaneled its own assessment and planning workshop with outside scientific experts to determine what information is really needed for potential management and what goals can realistically be accomplished by the local government agencies. We have put together a five-year management plan for our coral reefs and will submit it to the next meeting of the United States Coral Reef Task Force in November.

We try to stay ahead, but with the advent of climatic change and rise in sea level we know we have great challenges ahead of us in the near future, unless the global climatic issues addressed at the Barbados Conference are addressed in a timely manner, as may be mandated by this conference. Although as a region we are only beginning to experience the environmental problems that plague the industrialized nations of the world, we clearly must face the fact that we have responsibilities for reversing the planet's environmental degradation. Although our efforts and consumption patterns may seem minute, on a larger scale it is imperative that we plan now to reverse much of the damage already done to the islands and to continue to gain insight on how our trade and economic development patterns might perpetuate known global environmental abuse.

It has been said that we do not inherit the Earth from our parents, but that we only borrow it from our children. We must have respect for nature's balancing act and find personal truth in the reality that our actions as a region, as island nations and as individuals are in fact significant for the global balance sheet of environmental health.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Simón Molina Duarte, Secretary-General of the Association of Caribbean States.

Mr. Molina Duarte (Association of Caribbean States)(*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, allow me at the outset to congratulate you on your election and to thank you for the honour of allowing me to speak here.

As Secretary-General of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS), I would like to begin this, my maiden address to the General Assembly, by expressing the sincere gratitude of the Association for the honour of having been granted observer status in the General Assembly on 15 October 1998.

The Association, which celebrated its fifth anniversary on 24 July 1999, is composed of 25 countries that are also full Members of the United Nations, as well as other associate member countries such as Aruba, France — also a United Nations Member — in respect to French Guiana, Guadeloupe and Martinique, and the Netherlands Antilles. The ACS is now in a better position to pursue closer and broader cooperation with the United Nations in order to contribute to the development of joint

programmes that are favourable to the greater Caribbean region.

The main objectives of the ACS, as enshrined in the Convention establishing the Association, are as follows: first, the strengthening of the process of regional cooperation and integration, with a view to creating a broader geo-economic space in this region; secondly, preserving the environmental integrity of the Caribbean Sea, which is regarded as the common heritage of the peoples of this region; and thirdly, promoting the sustainable development of the greater Caribbean region. The ACS functions primarily as an organism for consultation, cooperation and concerted action in the context of the economic integration and sustainable human development of the greater Caribbean region.

In April this year the Second Summit of Heads of State and/or Government of the States and Territories of the Association of Caribbean States was held in the historic city of Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic. The Declaration of Santo Domingo and the accompanying Plan of Action, unanimously adopted at the Second Summit, are a reflection of the deliberations of that important Summit, which aimed at elaborating a medium- to long-term strategy for achieving the objectives set out in the establishing Convention. In addition, the heads of State and/or Government also adopted the Declaration of the Sustainable Tourism Zone of the Caribbean, and the ministers for foreign affairs signed a memorandum of understanding for the establishment of this zone. Once implemented, it will be the first such zone in the world. I also wish to emphasize that in light of the extreme vulnerability of the region to adverse consequences of natural disasters, the foreign ministers also signed an agreement for regional cooperation in natural disasters which covers all countries of the ACS.

Of particular relevance to this special session of the General Assembly is the fact that in the Declaration of Santo Domingo, and in accordance with the stated objectives of preserving the environmental integrity of the Caribbean Sea, the heads of State supported the effort of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) to have the Caribbean Sea declared a special area in the context of sustainable development and instructed countries and their representatives to include this subject in the Caribbean Environmental Strategy prepared by our organization.

Prior to this, the Association of Caribbean States had cooperated, and continues to cooperate, with CARICOM and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean subregional headquarters for the Caribbean, in the inter-agency collaborative group on the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.

The draft resolution presented to this special session on the recognition of the Caribbean Sea as a special area in the context of sustainable development therefore reflects the highest political will of all the members of the ACS and endeavors to coordinate the various efforts to address sectoral issues relating to the management of the Caribbean Sea and to treat in a holistic manner this semi-enclosed regional sea, on which so many States rely for their prosperity and social development. Obviously, the relevance of such an approach transcends the region, and it is the hope of the Caribbean countries that a model might be found for the benefit of other ecologically fragile enclosed and semi-enclosed areas.

Moreover, the draft resolution has been the fruit of countless hours of dedicated labour on the part of diplomats of the countries of the CARICOM and the ACS. I would like to pay particular tribute to the tireless efforts of the permanent missions to the United Nations of the countries of the greater Caribbean region over the past weeks in preparing this draft resolution for submission to the General Assembly.

Lastly, I also wish to recognize the endorsement of the draft resolution introduced by the Group of 77 and China and all the other countries supporting the draft resolution.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Edwin Carrington, Secretary-General of the Caribbean Community.

Mr. Carrington (Caribbean Community): We thank you, Mr. President, for the opportunity to address the Assembly on a subject which spells life or death for the countries of our region, the Caribbean. Held in Barbados — a founding member State of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) — the 1994 Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and the resultant Barbados Programme of Action are of particular significance to the Caribbean Community.

As a 15-member group of 12 small islands and three low-lying coastal States, the Caribbean Community is the

largest economic grouping of small States Members of the United Nations.

The member States of the Caribbean Community are vulnerable to virtually all the classic problems of small States, some more than others. They are located in a geographic region highly susceptible to natural disasters: hurricanes, storms, floods, droughts, earthquakes and volcanoes. While others experience many, if not all, of these natural disasters, the significant difference in the case of the States of the Caribbean and other small island States is that as a result of their small size, the impact of these disasters invariably tends to leave no corner unaffected. Many of these disasters are related to climate change and global warming, two phenomena to the causes of which small islands States contribute little, but from which they are likely to suffer most. The latest information suggests that these various disasters, natural and man-induced, are likely to increase in number and intensity and are projected to cause an even greater loss of life and destruction of economic and social facilities and infrastructure. The frequency and intensity of recent hurricanes in the Caribbean region would suggest, unfortunately, that this projection might well be correct.

Therefore, in evaluating the quality of life in these States, those who are guided simply by somewhat bloated per capita income levels must understand that such income levels need to be seriously deflated by an appropriate vulnerability index if one is to arrive at a realistic sustainable quality of life. Also, such an index must have relevance to the entire international community and its relevant institutions and must be referred to by them. In the present circumstances, therefore, all those who tend to perceive these territories as paradise must please understand that there is a serious downside to paradise.

The CARICOM States are also highly open economies, significantly dependent on agricultural exports, mainly traded under preferential arrangements. Indeed, this was how the very foundation of these economies was laid. These economies are now being seriously, adversely affected by the current process of globalization, trade and financial liberalization and an all-too-rapid dismantling of those preferential trade arrangements. The banana case is only the most dramatic.

The resulting vulnerability and volatility of their export earnings to these and other external economic shocks are factors over which they have no control whatsoever and are well known to all of us. It is not surprising, therefore, that nine of the 14 independent CARICOM States are among the 25 most vulnerable States in the world.

This special session and the upcoming World Trade Organization (WTO) Ministerial Conference present ideal opportunities for the international community to address both the natural and policy-induced sources of vulnerability of small island developing States. It is an important opportunity that the international community cannot squander with impunity.

We in CARICOM, like many other small island developing States, have not been standing idle in this regard. We have been pursuing various measures to protect our environment and to enhance our sustainability. In doing so, we have received some support from external sources, for which we are deeply appreciative. The following few examples of regional level action will demonstrate this.

With respect to our living marine resources, we have been implementing, with significant assistance from Canada, a Caribbean fisheries resources assessment and management programme. We sincerely hope that the assistance can continue as we move to a longer-term, more regionally sustained effort.

With respect to sea-level rise, we have just commenced the implementation of a Caribbean programme for adaptation to climate change to provide data and develop human resources. For these activities, we have received assistance from the Global Environment Facility and from the Organization of American States. We trust that this assistance will continue over a longer period, as this problem, like most of the constraints facing these small States, cannot be removed overnight.

With respect to disaster mitigation and response, we have created a Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency with the assistance of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to prepare for and coordinate response to disasters. But resources are needed to strengthen this into a preparation response and recovery agency. More UNDP assistance is urgently needed as bilateral official development assistance continues to decline.

With respect to environmental policy, the Caribbean countries and the European Union have just agreed on a European Union-financed environmental programme for the countries of the Caribbean.

With respect to the Caribbean Sea, the common environmental endowment of the entire region, we have launched a project seeking a United Nations resolution for the international recognition of the Caribbean Sea as a special area in the context of sustainable development, with the full support of the entire membership of the Association of Caribbean States. The aim is to protect and preserve this most valuable asset and regional patrimony. We wish to thank all those States that have already expressed their support for this initiative and trust that those United Nations Members that continue to harbour doubts will join us in the weeks ahead in taking the first step towards the achievement of this objective, which will undoubtedly be to the benefit of all Members of the United Nations.

Since 1995, the year after the Barbados Global Conference, the work programme of the Caribbean Community secretariat, which I have the honour to head, has included a specific focus on and has given priority to sustainable development, commencing by lending visibility to the outcome of the 1994 Barbados Conference. One year after the Barbados Conference, our Ministers responsible for the environment met in Trinidad and Tobago to review the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and to create a coordinating mechanism for follow-up. The task of this coordinating mechanism was entrusted to the CARICOM secretariat and to the Port of Spain Office of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

Unfortunately, although our two agencies continue to work closely together to this end, neither has had the necessary resources to make this mechanism sufficiently effective.

More generally, to diminish the limitations of the naturally imposed smallness of our countries we have been deepening our integration arrangements to create out of 15 individual countries, including Haiti, a single market and economy with special provision therein for the arrangement with regard to the smallest of our already small States — the members of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States. The overall arrangement will not only create for us a little more size but will help to better position us to become more effectively integrated into the globalizing international economy.

We are therefore very conscious that much depends on our own efforts. We are, however, equally conscious that our efforts can be successful only in a positive and responsive international environment, an environment which recognizes a place and a role for even its smallest and most vulnerable members.

The Caribbean Community welcomes the three new Members of the United Nations — Kiribati, Nauru and the Kingdom of Tonga, all members of our sister organization, the South Pacific Forum, as well as of the Alliance of Small Island States. We look forward to working with them in our joint efforts on behalf of the small island developing States.

The members of the Caribbean Community have been greatly encouraged by many of the statements of understanding expressed during this special session by the developed and the larger developing States as regards the plight of small island developing States. We intend to hold them to their word. We look forward to the international community adopting and implementing the policies, including providing the resources, which would add more muscle to the Barbados Programme of Action and have a positive impact on the condition of small island developing States as part of the United Nations of the twenty-first century.

The United Nations cannot afford to hold forth as its promise to mankind for the new millennium a world comprising large, rich countries and small, poor and vulnerable ones.

In closing, I wish to thank you, Mr.President, for your skilful guidance of this debate, which can prove decisive for the condition of humanity in the coming century. We thank the Secretary-General and his staff also for their continuing outstanding service to all mankind, and we wish the United Nations a more glorious twenty-first century.

The President: I now call on His Excellency The Honourable Hubert Hughes, Observer of Anguilla.

Mr. Hughes (Anguilla): On behalf of the people of my very small island State, Anguilla — and, I believe I am safe in saying, on behalf of the peoples of the States of the British Virgin Islands, the Turks and Caicos Islands and Montserrat, all with a unique constitutional status, being non-independent and overseas territories of the United Kingdom — I am more than pleased to express my profound appreciation, pleasure and gratitude for this momentous privilege to address the General Assembly on so appropriate and economically significant a topic as sustainable development for small island developing States.

Although I attended the Conference on small island developing States, held in Barbados in 1994, my participation in this discussion in New York is of particular historic relevance in that, while in Barbados, I was part of the United Kingdom delegation and was thus not permitted to address that first small island developing States Conference. On this occasion, I am present in my exclusive right as the representative and independent spokesman of my people as their political leader.

Nevertheless, I am not here to deliberate on the status of the political and constitutional relations between Britain, the administering Power, and Anguilla, and I am certainly not competent to deal with the state of relations our sister overseas territories have with Britain, interesting though this issue may be, considering our many areas of incompatibility.

In Barbados, much of the discussion dealt with environmental issues, and while we in these small island developing States are particularly vulnerable to natural disasters brought on by rising sea levels due to global warming, hurricanes, volcanoes and over-forestation and general over-exploitation of our very limited natural resources, we will urge that much more emphasis be placed on those factors of the new order of globalization as that concept is applied to the issue of trade liberalization and competition so as not to negate the declared objectives of sustainable development for small island economies. We, as small island States, simply cannot be competitive with major industrial countries.

Geographically, we are simply not small States. We are not annexed to much bigger land masses, as Hong Kong is linked to China or Liechtenstein is linked to Austria and Switzerland. We are islands: we are each surrounded by water. Thus, we suffer the particular difficulties of geographical insularity, separated as we are by water, and our needs are proportionally greater than our size in so many ways.

We cannot use the infrastructural development of Trinidad, which is 500 miles away from us, to serve the communication needs of Anguilla.

There is therefore a delicate balance to be considered by the political leadership in a small non-independent territory like Anguilla, administered by Britain, insofar as the concept of sustainable development is concerned. Anguilla, despite its small size, will need an airport and a seaport, just like Trinidad, to meet its transport needs.

Even though we are small as a State, we are still a group of inhabitants: we are part of the category called human beings. We also have concerns about the maintenance of our identity as a distinct people, which we want to sustain as we seek a better standard of living. Sustainable development for tiny islands like Anguilla is therefore a very, very intriguing process.

We are not only conscious of the threat to our environment; we are also very concerned about losing our identity in the process of development. Therefore, while mindful of the need to create the conditions for the avoidance of poverty by attracting foreign investment, we can do that safely only if aid flows from the major donor agencies assist us in developing not only the social, but also the economic infrastructure. Without this critical support, our people will be at the mercy of ruthless foreign investors.

I am therefore very concerned when the G-7 group of industrial countries makes allegations of unfair tax legislation and unfair competition by small island developing States, which depend on the financial services industry as a second plank of income that is necessary to sustain some degree of development and financial diversification.

Having a tourist economy, which for Anguilla came about very rapidly, produced another economic irony, in that my island does not qualify for many United Nations aid programmes due to the island's high per capita income rating. While it is true that very high wages are paid out to the top 10 per cent of expatriate technical and managerial staff in our tourism and in our now growing financial services industries, the bulk of the local workers are paid very low wages. To disqualify small island developing States like Anguilla from these United Nations aid programmes is unfair and irrelevant. This way of assessing our needs should be revisited. Per capita income is not the criterion that should be used.

While reiterating my gratitude for this opportunity to address this gathering, I regret that the limitations of time hinder my desire to give adequate airing to my concerns regarding the obstacles to be overcome in the accomplishment of sustainable development for the diverse small island developing States such as ours in the non-independent territories.

The President: In accordance with the decision taken earlier, I shall now give the floor to the representatives of three non-governmental organizations.

I first give the floor to Mr. Atherton Martin, Executive Director of the Caribbean Conservation Association.

Mr. Martin (Caribbean Conservation Association): On behalf of the International Network of Small Island Developing States, Non-governmental Organizations and Indigenous Peoples' Organizations, and the non-governmental organization community of the Mediterranean, mid-Atlantic, Caribbean, Pacific and Indian Ocean regions, as well as the small island developing States' diaspora and the wide range of constituencies we represent, we congratulate the United Nations representatives here on having successfully negotiated agreement on the draft declaration. We would have welcomed the opportunity to share our thoughts with this gathering at a much earlier stage of the proceedings, in the hope that our practical suggestions would positively influence the positions of Member States. In the light of this, we wish to focus on some concrete recommendations on several issues that, in our view, will move the process of sustainable development along in all small island developing States.

The negative impact of economic globalization and trade liberalization has been most dramatically felt by the small islands of the world. The Caribbean, for example, has seen its traditional market for bananas in the United Kingdom eroded by the headlong, reckless and unwarranted rush to implement free trade. Measures to mitigate these impacts should include full cost-accounting of the human factors of banana production and the integration of costs associated with, for example, more sustainable production through low-input and organic farming.

Other industries are also threatened by World Trade Organization (WTO) measures, including the sectors of offshore services, beef production and other agricultural commodities. If WTO rulings can interfere with the national economic development planning of a large country like India, for example, the implications for small islands are even more foreboding.

The goals of sustainable development are achievable, but we need to further strengthen implementation through greater integration of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States into local and national development plans and strategies.

International donors, too, need to consider the Programme of Action as the framework for cooperation and collaboration on national development strategies, rather than the current narrow sectoral and project approaches that still seem to dominate.

We believe that national and regional implementing institutions should be strengthened through the provision of adequate resources, with more mechanisms for the creative financing of sustainable development initiatives.

Greater public awareness could facilitate the more active involvement of community organizations in project design and implementation.

Greater involvement of local entrepreneurs and improved access to credit would help transform the Programme of Action into a more vital instrument of sustainable development.

Although partnerships for sustainable development are evolving in many small island States, new partnerships are needed between the small island States and the rest of the international community to ensure, for example, the designation of the Caribbean Sea as a special area. That designation is crucial because of the importance of the sea as a vital food, transport and tourism resource — and also as a zone of peace. In this regard, we are calling for the removal of all external military bases and for the review of the Shiprider Agreement.

The exposure to hazardous substances by the trans-shipment of radioactive wastes, mixed oxide fuel, plutonium and nuclear derivatives through the waters of our regions directly threatens the well-being and safety of the peoples, flora and fauna of these regions. Non-governmental organizations express their strong support for the efforts of the Governments of the regions of the small island developing States to assert their sovereign rights to bring about an immediate cessation of these dangerous shipments. This support from non-governmental organizations is unequivocal, and is even more significant when we recognize that it is the friendly Governments of France, Great Britain and Japan that are the principal perpetrators. We therefore call on all Member States participating in this special session to give their full support to the principles outlined in paragraph

24 (c) (iii) of the Barbados Programme of Action, which allows small island developing States to prohibit the transport of toxic and hazardous materials within their jurisdiction.

We call on the member Governments of the small island developing States to demand far more equitable returns for our natural resources, in particular with regard to the tuna resources of the South Pacific region. In this regard, we call on the distant water fishing nations to assist instead in the development of the capacities of small island developing States to harvest our resources ourselves.

Within the framework of the Barbados Programme of Action, we call on all stakeholders to accept their responsibilities; to exercise greater political will; and to agree to be held publicly accountable for commitments made.

There is much more to be done by all of us. Resources must be made available to assist non-governmental organizations to reach out to an even broader section of the major groups and especially to the many constituencies that still remain unrepresented or under-represented, such as the unemployed, the landless farmers, women, youth, the disabled, indigenous peoples, the homeless and many others.

Governments, too, can do more by ensuring that in the spirit of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, in the spirit of Agenda 21 and, certainly, in the spirit of the Barbados Programme of Action, every United Nations delegation should reflect the diversity of that country by including representatives of non-governmental organizations and other major groups that, through their vast networks and working experience, can add valuable information and expertise, which would enable our Governments to make even more informed decisions.

The international financial community, too, can do more by translating the words of World Bank President Wolfensohn into action and by ensuring that the process of planning and implementation of development places the needs of people first.

The United Nations community too can and should demonstrate its commitment by ensuring that the views of non-governmental organizations are heard and by including, earlier in the proceedings of these important deliberations, an opportunity for input by the non-governmental organizations.

The President: I now give the floor to Mrs. Losena Tubanavau-Salabula, Assistant Director of the Pacific Concerns Resource Centre.

Mrs. Tubanavau-Salabula (Pacific Concerns Resource Centre): Let me first convey to you, Sir, the warmest greetings from the Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific Movement (NFIP), which is the oldest network of non-governmental organizations in the Pacific region.

The substance of the presentation that I have the honour to make here was adopted by the eighth NFIP Conference on 24 September 1999, in Papeete, Tahiti, French Polynesia.

We are concerned that paragraph 24 (c)(iii) of the Barbados Programme of Action is no longer acceptable to the international community. This paragraph states that we

> "Accept the right of small island developing States to regulate, restrict and/or ban the importation of products containing non-biodegradable and/or hazardous substances and to prohibit the transboundary movement of hazardous and radioactive wastes and materials within their jurisdiction, consistent with international law". (A/CONF.167/9, annex II)

In our view, the rejection of this language is symptomatic of the roll-back of what little concessions the small island developing States were able to squeeze out of the Barbados negotiations five years ago.

Furthermore, this rejection flies in the face of the overwhelming opposition expressed by Governments in the Caribbean and Pacific Ocean and by the South Pacific Forum to the recent shipment of radioactive mixed oxide fuel on the *Pacific Teal* and *Pacific Pintail* through their waters. Indeed, other Governments along the shipments' route, such as South Africa and the Australian Senate, have also expressed their opposition to the shipments.

Because of this roll-back, we feel that the small island developing States, including the small island Non-Self-Governing Territories, must go back to the drawing board and reassert what few rights they have.

We salute the declaration on 30 August by the people of East Timor, or Timor Lorosae, of their right to independence. We call upon the General Assembly to do

all that is practicable to assist the soon-to-be-independent state of Timor Lorosae, to rebuild its infrastructure and to take its rightful place in the United Nations and, of course, in the Alliance of Small Island States.

We call on the General Assembly to ensure the continuation of the Special Committee on decolonization beyond the year 2000. To dismantle the Special Committee now would be to abandon the colonized peoples of the world, the majority of whom are in the small island countries.

We ask that Kanaky, New Caledonia, remain inscribed on the United Nations list of Non-Self-Governing Territories until it exercises its right to self-determination. The United States territory of Guam also calls for reparations for wartime atrocities and asserts its right to self-determination. Furthermore, we call for the re-listing of French Polynesia; Ka Pae'aina (Hawaii); West Papua (Irian Jaya); Rapanui (Easter Island) and Bougainville on the Special Committee's list of Non-Self-Governing Territories.

We call on the General Assembly to support the various calls made via the United Nations Commission on Human Rights for a permanent forum for indigenous peoples within the United Nations system. We affirm the declaration in the Barbados Programme of Action that the

> "technology, knowledge and customary and traditional practices of local and indigenous peoples, including resource owners and custodians, are adequately and effectively protected and that they thereby benefit directly, on an equitable basis and on mutually agreed terms, from any utilization of such technologies, knowledge and practices or from any technological development directly derived therefrom." (ibid., para. 78)

Our island States were among the first in the world to warn against the horrifying consequences of climate change. We warned against the sea-level rise that could make our island homes, our livelihood and our cultures extinct. We formed the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) in 1990, which, with one-fifth of the United Nations seats, became the voice of the previously voiceless small island States. The whole world, developing and industrialized countries alike, recognized our vulnerability and included this recognition in the Framework Convention on Climate Change and in Agenda 21.

Encouraged by this support, our island States wanted to move further and proposed that the Barbados Conference take place. This first attempt by a group of States to further elaborate on Agenda 21 was unprecedented and has not been emulated since by any other group of countries which are Members of the United Nations. Our island States again took the lead and again received recognition from the whole world in the spirit of Barbados.

And here we are, five years later, the spirit of Barbados a distant memory. Now down to earth, we learn that the Barbados Programme of Action has not made a significant difference in the cooperation of the international community with the small island developing States. The report "European cooperation with small island developing States", by the University of Nijmegen, Netherlands, co-financed by the European Commission and available at this conference, concludes that:

> "For most European donors, the Barbados Programme of Action did not take root in the existing cooperation with the small island developing States."

For the Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific Movement and the Pacific non-governmental organizations, it has been a staggering experience to see how much in the way of human and financial resources went into the donor conference last February, the seventh session of the Commission on Sustainable Development last April and this special session, and how little in the way of concrete results of the Barbados Programme of Action has been achieved. If only a fraction of those resources had been used for better coordination and integrated project development in both the small island developing States and the donor countries, our presentation today would have been more positive.

In closing, we wish to re-emphasize the rights of all peoples, especially colonized peoples, to self-determination and independence. It is only when this fundamental human right is recognized and practiced that we really can start talking about the sustainable development of small island developing States. Let the spirit of our ancestors guide the Assembly in making a just decision in recognizing this right for our Pacific islands.

Thank you, Sir, for the opportunity you have given us. May God bless you and the General Assembly.

The President: I call on Mr. Oomar Karabary, representative of the Pan African Movement.

Mr. Karabary: The non-governmental organizations of the small island developing States of the Indian Ocean form an integral part of efforts to ensure the adoption of policies and practices that encourage the long-term development and protection of the environment of small island States in the Indian Ocean.

I wish briefly to highlight the principal problems that are specific to the small island developing States of the Indian Ocean region and their possible solutions. First, climate change has given rise to drought, a phenomenon that has become progressively worse over the past few years. This has had a major, negative impact on agriculture, in particular on the sugar cane crops which form the principal source of revenue in the islands, with the exception of Maldives and Seychelles, which rely heavily on tourism for their livelihood.

Secondly, sea-level rise caused by global warming has threatened the very existence of the low-lying islands of the region. The 1,100 islands that make up the Maldive Islands have had their coastlines inundated by rising sea levels.

Thirdly, the problem of drug-related activities in small island developing States is a major concern in our islands, as they lie along the major drug-trafficking route between Asia and Africa. The region's chain of islands, including the Comoros, Maldives and Seychelles, are not spared the activities of money laundering and crime, which impede the economic and social development of our peoples and environment.

Fourthly, the structural adjustment policies directed by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund serve in part to marginalize large segments of our diverse population.

Fifthly, globalization and trade liberalization have come to have an adverse effect on the cultural and religious values of our peoples. Sixthly, and finally, the small island States of the Indian Ocean suffer from a sore lack of human resource development facilities.

As the Secretary-General stated in his address to this special session yesterday, there is trouble in paradise; indeed, I can assure the Assembly that there is trouble in our area of Indian Ocean paradise, too. While the problems I have outlined are not unique to the Indian Ocean, the possible solutions must, however, be tailored to respond to the specific needs of our peoples and our environment.

Non-governmental organizations of the small island States of the Indian Ocean invite all Member States in both the developed world and developing countries to introduce practices that would put a cap on pollution rates and thereby limit the growth of global warming and control the phenomenon of rising sea levels. Non-governmental organizations of the small island developing States of our region pledge to continue the tireless effort being made in our local communities to change the practices of individuals and Governments that may tend to place an undue burden on our fragile environment.

I wish to highlight the concerns of the non-governmental organizations of the small island developing States with regard to the occupation of the Indian Ocean island of Diego Garcia, which is currently being used as a United States military base, and request the demilitarization of this island.

To provide a lasting solution to the drug-related problems, I call upon Member States from Africa and Asia to form a tripartite cartel with the small island States of the Indian Ocean to end the trade in illicit drugs, which is a scourge on the lives of our respective peoples.

Non-governmental organizations of the small island developing States are aware that, like our sister islands in other parts of the world, small islands in the Indian Ocean lack the requisite financial resources to match our big problems. The non-governmental organizations of the small island developing States commend countries such as Australia and Canada and the members of the European Union, which have assumed the moral responsibility of forgiving the bilateral debts of some small island States.

Non-governmental organizations of the small island developing States of the Indian Ocean invite other countries to consider similar forms of reparation, and we encourage Governments of the region to invest specifically to provide possible solutions in other areas, such as in the development of human resource facilities in these small island States. Non-governmental organizations are recognized for their practical work at the community level. Even as we think and work locally, we recognize that our actions have implications globally.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*) **and agenda item 9**

Review and appraisal of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States

Report of the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole (A/S-22/9)

Adoption of the final documents

The President: I call on His Excellency Mr. John Ashe of Antigua and Barbuda, Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole of the Twenty-second Special Session, to introduce the report of the Ad Hoc Committee.

Mr. Ashe (Antigua and Barbuda): I have the honour to introduce the report of the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole of the Twenty-second Special Session of the General Assembly, which is contained in document A/S-22/9.

The General Assembly will recall that the Committee was charged with consideration of the agenda item entitled "Review and appraisal of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States". The attention of representatives is drawn to paragraph 22 of the document, in which the Ad Hoc Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of a draft resolution, entitled "Declaration and state of progress and initiatives for the future implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States".

Attention is also drawn to paragraph 23 of the same document, in which the Ad Hoc Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of a draft decision, entitled "Letter dated 24 September 1999 from the Permanent Representative of Canada to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly".

I therefore submit the report of the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole for consideration by the General Assembly.

The President: The Assembly will first proceed to take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole of the Twenty-second Special Session in paragraph 22 of document A/S-22/9. The Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole recommended the adoption of the draft resolution.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt the draft resolution?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution S-22/2).

The President: The Assembly will now proceed to take a decision on the draft decision recommended by the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole of the Twenty-second Special Session in paragraph 23 of document A/S-22/9. The Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole recommended the adoption of the draft decision.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt the draft decision?

The draft decision was adopted.

The President: I call on the representative of Finland.

Ms. Hassi (Finland): I am taking the floor on behalf of the European Union. I want to start by saying that we are pleased that these two significant documents have been adopted by the General Assembly at its twenty-second special session, on the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.

We appreciate the fact that poverty, which was identified as an overarching theme in Rio, at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, and in the Rio + 5 process, is a theme that is clearly reflected in the Declaration, in line with the review text itself. However the European Union would like to put on record that, as indicated yesterday in the Committee of the Whole, we would have liked to see in the Declaration a more precise reference to the least developed countries among the group of small island developing States.

Let me reiterate our sincere appreciation to the Group of 77 and China, the Alliance of Small Island States and all our other colleagues, including the Secretariat, for all their efforts in bringing this long process, which started as early as February this year, to successful fruition.

The last chapter of the five-year review document now in our hands is focused on partnerships. The European Union is ready and willing to continue to work with the small island developing States within the framework of our development cooperation policies, both through the European Commission and through the bilateral and multilateral channels available to the European Union and its member countries.

Mr. Hales (United States of America): My delegation strongly supports the development efforts of small island developing States, and we strongly support the principles and objectives spelled out in the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, which recognize the special needs of the developing countries. We firmly believe that, in order for small island developing States — or any other countries — to take advantage of the benefits of globalization, they must be integrated into the world economy, including through membership in the World Trade Organization (WTO).

The document just adopted by the Assembly encourages the multilateral trading system to consider, as appropriate, the grant of special and differential treatment to small island developing States. We interpret this language to be consistent with, but not expansive of, United States trade philosophy and market access policies with respect to developing countries. The document language should not be seen as prejudging our position on granting special and differential treatment in any bilateral, regional, or multilateral negotiations. Nor should it prejudice regional initiatives of the United States which offer substantial additional market access to developing countries through such programmes as our General System of Preferences, which offers special duty-free access to numerous developing countries, our Caribbean Basin initiative, the proposed African Growth and Opportunity Act and negotiations towards a free trade area of the Americas.

Although the document language does not provide them with unique special and differential status within the WTO, we believe that those small island developing States which are truly disadvantaged by geography and infrastructure can benefit from the technical assistance and capacity-building provided by WTO members to facilitate their integration into the emerging global trading system.

Ms. Drayton (Guyana): The Group of 77 and China consider that the two documents before us represent a sound basis for the second phase of the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action. That Programme of Action is one of the most implementable to be adopted by the United Nations. It contains proposals that are focused, action-oriented and quantifiable. The Group emphasizes that the demonstrated commitment of the international community to its implementation remains critical.

The Programme of Action not only describes a strategy to address the issues that are of urgent concern to all small islands. It also offers, in its mechanism for implementation, the flexibility that allows for a targeted approach, tailored to the specific needs of each island.

It is undeniable that the question of economic vulnerability will increasingly present a challenge to the ultimate objective of small island developing States. Small island developing States simply seek an opportunity to participate effectively in the international economic and trade system. The success of that involvement is fundamental to their economic viability and integral to their capacity to achieve sustainable development.

Here, if I may comment briefly on the statement just made by the representative of the United States, I would point out that in the document we have adopted we talked about the need to participate sustainably: it is not only a matter of trade liberalization but of ensuring that these islands can continue to have a future.

The Group looks forward to enhanced cooperation with all partners and to the continued support of the United Nations system for the further implementation of the Programme of Action.

Mr. Slade (Samoa): It is my honour to speak on behalf of the States members of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS). First, I want to thank you, Mr. President, for the quantity of intense work and attention that you have given to this process; we are most grateful to you. Secondly, let me take this opportunity to thank all States Members of the United Nations and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations that participated in this two-day special session for the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.

The adoption of the documents before the Assembly brings to a close a process that has occupied us for much of this year, beginning with the meeting of donors and small island States in February. That process has involved so many actors; allow me at this stage to convey our utmost appreciation to the United Nations system.

The Under-Secretary-General, Mr. Nitin Desai, is in the General Assembly Hall, and we thank him, and the entire system, for this initiative, which led us through the preparatory process to this moment.

This whole session has been about implementation, and about the strengthening of partnerships. A great deal of awareness has been created in the past few days, and we are grateful for that process. I believe it bodes well for the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action, on which our determination and our efforts have been concentrated over the past two days.

Once again, I express the deep appreciation of the States members of AOSIS.

Closing statement by the President

The President: Words have been spoken, some of them fiery and passionate, by many eminent world leaders and heads of delegation. Yet, another call to duty starts here, and the direction to be taken is straightforward.

We have adopted two documents — indeed, very important documents, a resolution and a decision — unanimously. The consensus is clear and focused on implementation, but it is also recognized that without funds, resources and sustained goodwill from the rich nations and multilateral financial institutions, the way forward is uncertain. Time is running out. We must do the right thing. When we leave here we must act, and that action requires the implementation of the resolution and the decision adopted here.

The Rio Agenda 21 and Barbados Programme of Action have set out the priority areas and strategies for implementation. These development plans remain both urgent and relevant today, as they were when they were articulated in 1992 and in 1994 respectively. This special session, thus, was in part a reminder to the international community to live up to the promises made and to complete the assistance programmes that have been undertaken. The record of what we have achieved here will be open to the court of public opinion for scrutiny and final judgement.

It is also an occasion for rededication to taking further steps towards ensuring that the business of the small island developing States is truly the business of the whole of humanity. In Africa we say that a shepherd's work is not done until he has accounted for the last few missing sheep, even the very last one. This is where the United Nations and its agencies come in. Even when the dark clouds gather, the United Nations knows the way, and the will of these embattled States to succeed must always draw inspiration from the unity and solidarity of the 188 Member States represented here.

As an old friend of mine insists, we must keep hope alive. We have listened to States, we have also listened to representatives of the Observer groups and, lastly, we have listened to the representatives of the non-governmental organizations, and together we are sending a message to our sisters and brothers in the small island developing States that we are with them.

Lastly, to those who will depart New York to go back home, I wish Godspeed and all success in your endeavours.

Minute of silent prayer or meditation

The President: I invite representatives to stand and observe a minute or silent prayer or meditation.

The members of the General Assembly observed a minute of silent prayer or meditation.

Closure of the twenty-second special session of the General Assembly

The President: I declare closed the twenty-second special session of the General Assembly.

The meeting rose at 10.05 p.m.